

Hillsboro
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



Momentum for Growth

**Testimony of Paul Geray, Chairman
Hillsboro, North Dakota Economic Development Corporation
September 17, 2015**

Madam Chair and members of the interim Economic Impact Committee, my name is Paul Geray, and I am the Chairman of Hillsboro North Dakota Economic Development Corporation. I am also owner of Paul's Hometown Repair, an auto repair shop in Hillsboro. On behalf of Hillsboro EDC, I would like to discuss the necessity of natural gas expansion for business development in our area and across the state's unserved and underserved areas.

Hillsboro, like many rural communities, is doing everything we can to recruit and retain businesses. In the last several years, we have experienced growth in both business and community development. We have, however, found that we are at a disadvantage when competing for business with similar sized communities in Minnesota.

Our largest recent disappointment came in 2012, when a company came to visit Hillsboro several times. They toured the proposed land, were given a tax incentives package and were very pleased with the community offerings. After much thought, they eventually decided to locate their 40 jobs in Hawley, Minnesota, just 60 miles east of Hillsboro. When asked their reasoning, they were very willing to share that their one and only reason for not selecting Hillsboro was the lack of natural gas.

Since that time, we have had other manufactures seeking sites in our community, but look elsewhere into Minnesota for communities with natural gas. Our location on I-29 and proximity to Fargo and Grand Forks is very appealing to many companies, but the lack of natural gas has turned many away. We also realize that site selectors may not even consider our community due to the lack of natural gas.

As a local economic development organization, our primary goal is to ensure the continued growth and success of our local businesses, which in turn, benefits the state. Our organization, along with Traill County EDC, has worked with Xcel Energy to evaluate our options to make this infrastructure development a possibility. We have found that without additional options from the state to offset infrastructure costs, our community will not be able to develop the infrastructure on our own.

We feel the development of natural gas infrastructure will be a long-term business investment in our community, and one we are dedicated to work toward. This development will greatly assist us with competing with Minnesota communities for companies and jobs.

We appreciate the willingness of this committee to evaluate potential options for incentives and tools to assist communities like Hillsboro. If we can help the committee in any way, we will be glad to do so. Thank you for your time and consideration of this issue which is very important to our community and the state's business growth.

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